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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000093

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STATE FOR SA/INS AND CA/OCS
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TAGS: AEMR FAID CASC PGOV CE MV

SUBJECT: TXFO01: SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES SITREP NO. 10,
JANUARY 12

REF: COLOMBO 70 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission. 1.4 (b,d)

SRI LANKA

11. (U) Consular efforts: The consular section continues to focus entirely on tsunami-related efforts. The number of AmCits deaths in Sri Lanka still stands at eight, with one addition AmCit missing and presumed dead. Consular staff have reduced the number of welfare and whereabouts cases to six AmCits unaccounted for. (There are no AmCits unaccounted for in Maldives.)

12. (U) Casualty figures: The death toll around the island continues to remain somewhat static. The Government of Sri Lanka's (GSL) official figures are 30,882 dead, with an additional 6,088 missing. Over 15,000 people remain injured. Some 500 IDP camps are tending to the needs of close to 300,000 displaced people.

13. (U) Life in Sri Lanka: On January 11, 12,000 children in the affected areas returned to schools where the students were often met by debris-filled classrooms with desks and chairs in piles. UNFAO estimates that 66 percent of Sri Lanka's fishing fleet was rendered inoperable by the December 26 tsunami. UNICEF reports that, by next week, it will complete a survey to identify all children who are unaccompanied (those whose parents are dead or missing) and begin efforts to locate family or other relatives.

14. (SBU) USG relief efforts: The public affairs section is preparing a press release that will tally the amount and types of aid that the United States is providing to Sri Lanka. As one facet of relief assistance, USAID hopes to program significant funds and begin activities in the next two weeks. Given the scope of on-going relief efforts, the DART will remain in place for the foreseeable future. USAID DART members will participate in a WFP meeting in Colombo on Saturday, January 15.

15. (C) The U.S. military continues to expand its program and work closely with the GSL, USAID, and INGOs in fully utilizing its resources. The USS Duluth is currently operating off the southern coast of Sri Lanka, supporting personnel conducting engineering operations in the Galle area. U.S. military officials in Galle have coordinated with the Governor of the Southern Province to identify priority areas and needs in which to employ U.S. resources. Military commanders plan to leave personnel on the ground in the south while the Duluth transits to Sri Lanka's eastern coast so that helicopter assets can provide heavy lift for transferring tons of produce from the up-country region to the Ampara district, one of the country's most devastated regions. On January 14, a U.S. medical advance team will travel to Jaffna in preparation for the January 16 arrival of the U.S. military medical team to provide expertise and support to Point Pedro Hospital in the government-controlled north. (Note: At the time the tsunami hit, only one surgeon was on duty at Point Pedro Hospital, tending to the thousands of casualties.)

16. (C) Visitors in support of U.S. assistance: The majority of the members of CODEL Leach departed Sri Lanka today, headed to India. The members, who spent part of January 11 in Galle being briefed by General Panter, visiting an IDP camp at a Buddhist temple, and a school that had been funded by AID/OTI, commented that the trip had given them a much better understanding of the devastation and the depth of the needs for rehabilitation. In the coming days, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, accompanied by PACOM

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Commander Admiral Fargo, will tour the affected areas and the U.S. military relief efforts in the country.

MALDIVES

17. (U) Relief priorities: As the death toll remains at 82, with 26 still missing, the Government of the Republic of Maldives (GORM) is focusing on water and shelter issues for its citizens, as well as the cleanup of rubble on the some 53 inhabited islands. On January 12, Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the Government Spokesman, told poloff that the government had determined some of the devastated islands would not be re-inhabited and was working on identifying new land areas for those communities. At present, approximately four islands are under consideration for abandonment.

18. (U) Hard times for Maldives: The Government Spokesman also told poloff that occupancy throughout Maldives' resorts was only 28 percent. (In the aftermath of the tsunami, which damaged resort islands as well, the GORM estimated it had approximately 60 percent of its rooms operational.) The decrease in visitors was having a ripple effect on local citizens, according to Shaheed. The Maldivians who normally supply fish and produce to the resorts were finding a decreased demand -- leading to decreased income -- for their goods.

19. (C) U.S. assistance: The U.S. military, in conjunction with British and French counterparts, has developed a detailed plan for assistance to Maldives. Two U.S. military ships scheduled to arrive off the coast of Sri Lanka January 12 may be re-directed to support operations -- such as water purification efforts -- in Maldives. Military personnel are planning to depart shortly for Maldives to coordinate operations from Male' and supplement USAID personnel already on the ground.

LUNSTEAD